

The Writing Assessment

The NAEP writing assessment measures three purposes of writing: narrative, informative, and persuasive. The narrative tasks comprise first-person and third-person fictional stories. The informative tasks comprise description, explanation, and analysis. The persuasive tasks comprise writing to convince, writing to construct an argument, and writing to refute a position.

Across the three purposes for writing, students are asked to respond in a variety of forms. These forms include essays, letters, reports, stories, and articles. Some tasks require students to write for a specified audience; for example, to a teacher, to a committee, or to a friend. Writing tasks in the 2006 assessment incorporate an array of stimulus materials, such as color photographs, comic strips, newspaper articles, and poems.

Each student participating in the assessment will receive one test booklet. At grade 12, students will receive two 25-minute writing tasks. All booklets contain a Planning Page, thus providing students with the opportunity to make notes and organize their ideas. In addition, all participating students are provided with a writing strategies brochure to remind them of various ways to plan and review their writing. For more information regarding the writing assessment framework please visit <http://nagb.org>.

NAEP Writing Framework Distribution of Time to Be Spent on Tasks for Each Writing Purpose

	Grade 12
Narrative	25%
Informative	35%
Persuasive	40%

Writing Booklet Directions

Sections 1 and 2 each contain one writing assignment. You will have 25 minutes to complete each assignment.

In each section, read the page that tells you your writing assignment. Then go on to the planning page where you can make notes and plan what to write. Do not write your paper on the planning page. After the planning page, there are lined pages where you should write your paper.

The following example shows what these pages look like.

The diagram illustrates the layout of a writing booklet with three pages shown in a staggered, overlapping fashion:

- Page 2:** A large rectangular box containing the text "Your assignment is to write about . . ." at the top and "Page 2" at the bottom.
- Page 3:** A rectangular box overlapping the right side of Page 2. It contains the heading "PLANNING PAGE" followed by instructions: "Using this page to make notes and organize your ideas. You may want to use suggestions from the *Ideas for Planning Your Writing* in the brochure to help you get started." and a bold instruction: "DO NOT WRITE YOUR RESPONSE ON THIS PAGE." The text "Page 3" is at the bottom.
- Page 4:** A rectangular box overlapping the right side of Page 3. It contains the heading "BEGIN WRITING YOUR RESPONSE ON THIS PAGE" followed by ten horizontal lines for writing. The text "Page 4" is at the bottom.

GO ON TO THE NEXT PAGE

Remember to start writing your papers on the lined pages that begin on page 4 of each section that has a writing assignment.

For each assignment, you will probably need all of the 25 minutes to plan and write. Use as many lined pages as you need to write your paper. You may want to use ideas from the brochure you have been given to help you plan and review your paper.

If you finish before time is called, read your paper again and make any changes that you think will make it better.

Do not go past the  sign at the end of each section until you are told to do so.



Grade 12 Sample Writing Prompts

Writing Prompt 1 (with sample response)

Informative: Save a Book

For *Save a Book*, students were asked to explain what book they would save by memorization if they lived in a society where reading was not allowed. Since any book could be chosen, a wide range of responses was acceptable. In this booklet we provide an example of an “Excellent” response.

A novel written in the 1950’s describes a world where people are not allowed to read books. A small group of people who want to save books memorize them, so that the books won’t be forgotten. For example, an old man who has memorized the novel *The Call of the Wild* helps a young boy memorize it by reciting the story to him. In this way, the book is saved for the future.

If you were told that you could save just one book for future generations, which book would you choose?

Write an essay in which you discuss which book you would choose to save for future generations and what it is about the book that makes it important to save. Be sure to discuss in detail why the book is important to you and why it would be important to future generations.

Sample “Excellent” Response

“Excellent” responses were well developed throughout with sentence variety and good word choice. The “Excellent” response shown below, about Herman Hesse’s *Demian*, is well developed and has strong transitions. Well-chosen details and precise word choices support a sustained controlling idea: that teens can learn from the main character’s coming of age. The “Excellent” rating was given to 4 percent of the responses to this task.

Sample "Excellent" Response

Creating a literary masterpiece is most likely every writer's dream. German writer Hermann Hesse did so when he wrote Demian, the story of one boy's coming of age.

Although this novel is not necessarily a blatant American classic, it does have many powerful traits and deserves to be read by any high schooler. In the sense of literary analysis, the novel is an excellent example of Jungian psychology, and serves to chronicle a boy named Emil Sinclair's individuation, or the process of finding out who he is. High school is a wonderful time of self-discovery, where teens bond with several groups of friends, try different foods, fashions, classes, and experiences, both good and bad. The end result in May of senior year is a mature and confident adult, ready to enter the next stage of life. Since Sinclair is going through much of what an average student might (troubles at school, falling in love) relating with

Sample "Excellent" Response (Continued)

and learning from Sinclair is an important aspect of the novel. The novel speaks of two realms: the dark half and the good half, and Sinclair's early "loss of innocence" by stealing a few coins from his mother. Many students feel disheartened by the sudden realization that they are no longer children, and long for the ignorant bliss of innocent childhood. Reading about Sinclair's journey through the good and bad realms prepares students for the imminent good and bad experiences in life, and provides them with a hope for the future: that such experiences will leave them a mature and well-rounded adult, full of wisdom and compassion.

Sample “Excellent” Response (Continued)

If one were to rid the world of books, Demian should be saved because of its profound impact on its readers. It is said that a book is a classic if people continue to read it decades after it is written. I see a classic as nothing more than a literary jewel, polished until society can gaze into it and see a perfect glimpse of itself.

Writing Prompt 2
Persuasive: Music Labels

Recently, the music industry started to put rating labels on record albums, compact discs, and tapes. These labels describe the content and language of the music. A local committee is considering a rating label law that would make it illegal for anyone under the age of 18 to buy recordings with negative ratings.

Write a letter to the committee telling whether or not you think that negative rating labels should be used to restrict teenagers from buying certain music. Give specific reasons to support your opinion.

Student Background Questionnaire

General Directions for Grade 12

In the next two sections, you will be asked questions about yourself and your education. The choices for some questions will be written across the page as shown. Fill in the oval for the best answer.

Example 1

	Never or hardly ever	Once or twice a month	Once or twice a week	Almost every day
1. How often do you watch movies on TV?	<input type="radio"/> A	<input type="radio"/> B	<input type="radio"/> C	<input type="radio"/> D

You should have filled in the oval below the answer that best tells how often you watch movies on TV.

The choices for some questions will be written down the page as shown. Now read Example 2 and indicate your answer.

Example 2

2. Which event would you prefer to attend?
<input type="radio"/> A basketball game
<input type="radio"/> B car show
<input type="radio"/> C concert
<input type="radio"/> D play

Make your answer mark clear and dark in the oval. If you make a mistake or want to change your answer, be sure to completely erase any unwanted marks.



Do not go past the sign at the end of each section until you are told to do so. If you finish before time is called, go back and check your work on that section only. Use your time carefully. Do as much as you can in each section.



Student Background Questionnaire

In this section, please tell us about yourself and your family. The section has 14 questions. Mark your answers in your booklet.

VB331330

VB331331

1. Are you Hispanic or Latino? Fill in one or more ovals.

- ☐ Ⓐ No, I am not Hispanic or Latino.
- ☐ Ⓑ Yes, I am Mexican, Mexican American, or Chicano.
- ☐ Ⓒ Yes, I am Puerto Rican or Puerto Rican American.
- ☐ Ⓓ Yes, I am Cuban or Cuban American.
- ☐ Ⓔ Yes, I am from some other Hispanic or Latino background.

2. Which of the following best describes you? Fill in **one or more ovals**.

- ☐ Ⓐ White
- ☐ Ⓑ Black or African American
- ☐ Ⓒ Asian
- ☐ Ⓓ American Indian or Alaska Native
- ☐ Ⓔ Native Hawaiian or other Pacific Islander

GO ON TO THE NEXT PAGE

For the rest of the questions in this section, fill in only **one** oval for each question.

VB331333

3. Does your family get a newspaper at least four times a week?

☐ A Yes
☐ B No
☐ C don't know.

VB331337

7. Is there an encyclopedia in your home? It could be a set of books, or it could be on the computer.

☐ A Yes
☐ B No
☐ C don't know.

VB331334

4. Does your family get any magazines regularly?

☐ A Yes
☐ B No
☐ C I don't know.

TB001101

8. About how many pages a day do you have to read in school and for homework?

☐ A 5 or fewer
☐ B 6–10
☐ C 11–15
☐ D 16–20
☐ E More than 20

VB331335

5. About how many books are there in your home?

☐ A Few (0–10)
☐ B Enough to fill one shelf (11–25)
☐ C Enough to fill one bookcase (26–100)
☐ D Enough to fill several bookcases (more than 100)

VB331339

9. How often do you talk about things you have studied in school with someone in your family?

☐ A Never or hardly ever
☐ B Once every few weeks
☐ C About once a week
☐ D Two or three times a week
☐ E Every day

VB331336

6. Is there a computer at home that you use?

☐ A Yes
☐ B No

GO ON TO THE NEXT PAGE

VB331447

10. How many days were you absent from school in the last month?

- Ⓐ None
- Ⓐ 1 or 2 days
- Ⓑ 3 or 4 days
- Ⓒ 5 to 10 days
- Ⓓ More than 10 days

VB330870

11. How far in school did your mother go?

- Ⓐ She did not finish high school.
- Ⓑ She graduated from high school.
- Ⓒ She had some education after high school.
- Ⓓ She graduated from college.
- Ⓔ I don't know.

VB330871

12. How far in school did your father go?

- Ⓐ He did not finish high school.
- Ⓑ He graduated from high school.
- Ⓒ He had some education after high school.
- Ⓓ He graduated from college.
- Ⓔ I don't know.

VB331451

13. How often do people in your home talk to each other in a language other than English?

- Ⓐ Never
- Ⓑ Once in a while
- Ⓒ About half of the time
- Ⓓ All or most of the time

HE002549

14. Which of the following best describes your high school program?

- Ⓐ General
- Ⓑ Academic or college preparatory
- Ⓒ Vocational or technical



Student Background Questionnaire

Writing—Grade 12

This section has 15 questions. Mark your answers in your booklet. Fill in only **one** oval for each question.

VB345622

1. Please indicate how much you DISAGREE or AGREE with the following statements about reading and writing. Fill in **one** oval on each line.

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly agree
a. When I read books, I learn a lot.	<input type="radio"/> (A)	<input type="radio"/> (B)	<input type="radio"/> (C)	<input type="radio"/> (D)
b. Reading is one of my favorite activities.	<input type="radio"/> (A)	<input type="radio"/> (B)	<input type="radio"/> (C)	<input type="radio"/> (D)
c. Writing things like stories or letters is one of my favorite activities.	<input type="radio"/> (A)	<input type="radio"/> (B)	<input type="radio"/> (C)	<input type="radio"/> (D)
d. Writing helps me share my ideas.	<input type="radio"/> (A)	<input type="radio"/> (B)	<input type="radio"/> (C)	<input type="radio"/> (D)

VB379288

2. How often do you do each of the following? Fill in **one** oval on each line.

	Never or hardly ever	Once or twice a month	Once or twice a week	Almost every day
a. Read for fun on your own time	<input type="radio"/> (A)	<input type="radio"/> (B)	<input type="radio"/> (C)	<input type="radio"/> (D)
b. Talk with your friends or family about something you have read	<input type="radio"/> (A)	<input type="radio"/> (B)	<input type="radio"/> (C)	<input type="radio"/> (D)
c. Write e-mails to your friends or family	<input type="radio"/> (A)	<input type="radio"/> (B)	<input type="radio"/> (C)	<input type="radio"/> (D)

GO ON TO THE NEXT PAGE 

VB345665

3. How often do you write each of the following **for school** this year? Fill in **one** oval on each line.

	Never or hardly ever	A few times a year	Once or twice a month	At least once a week
a. Thoughts or observations in a log or journal	<input type="radio"/> A	<input type="radio"/> B	<input type="radio"/> C	<input type="radio"/> D
b. A simple summary of something you have read	<input type="radio"/> A	<input type="radio"/> B	<input type="radio"/> C	<input type="radio"/> D
c. A report about something that you have studied or researched	<input type="radio"/> A	<input type="radio"/> B	<input type="radio"/> C	<input type="radio"/> D
d. An essay in which you analyze or interpret something	<input type="radio"/> A	<input type="radio"/> B	<input type="radio"/> C	<input type="radio"/> D
e. A letter or essay in which you try to convince or persuade others to believe or do something	<input type="radio"/> A	<input type="radio"/> B	<input type="radio"/> C	<input type="radio"/> D
f. A story (such as a story about a personal or imagined experience)	<input type="radio"/> A	<input type="radio"/> B	<input type="radio"/> C	<input type="radio"/> D
g. Business writing (such as a resume or letter to a company)	<input type="radio"/> A	<input type="radio"/> B	<input type="radio"/> C	<input type="radio"/> D



VB378055

4. When you write a paper or report **for school** this year, how often do you do each of the following? Fill in **one** oval on each line.

	Never or hardly ever	Sometimes	Almost always
a. Brainstorm with other students to decide what to write about	<input type="radio"/> Ⓐ	<input type="radio"/> Ⓑ	<input type="radio"/> Ⓒ
b. Organize your paper before you write (for example, make an outline, draw a chart)	<input type="radio"/> Ⓐ	<input type="radio"/> Ⓑ	<input type="radio"/> Ⓒ
c. Make changes to your paper to fix mistakes and improve your paper	<input type="radio"/> Ⓐ	<input type="radio"/> Ⓑ	<input type="radio"/> Ⓒ
d. Work with other students in pairs or small groups to discuss and improve your paper	<input type="radio"/> Ⓐ	<input type="radio"/> Ⓑ	<input type="radio"/> Ⓒ

VB378060

5. When you write a paper or report **for school** this year, how often do you do each of the following? Fill in **one** oval on each line.

	Never or hardly ever	Sometimes	Almost always
a. Use a computer from the beginning to write the paper or report (for example, use a computer to write the first draft)	<input type="radio"/> Ⓐ	<input type="radio"/> Ⓑ	<input type="radio"/> Ⓒ
b. Use a computer to make changes to the paper or report (for example, spell-check, cut and paste)	<input type="radio"/> Ⓐ	<input type="radio"/> Ⓑ	<input type="radio"/> Ⓒ
c. Look for information on the Internet to include in the paper or report	<input type="radio"/> Ⓐ	<input type="radio"/> Ⓑ	<input type="radio"/> Ⓒ

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VB378126

6. Think about the classes that you are taking this year. How often do you write something that is **at least a paragraph in length** for each of the following classes? Include things you write such as journal writing, reports, investigations, and essays. Fill in **one** oval on each line.

	Never or hardly ever	A few times a year	Once or twice a month	At least once a week
a. English class	<input type="radio"/> Ⓐ	<input type="radio"/> Ⓑ	<input type="radio"/> Ⓒ	<input type="radio"/> Ⓓ
b. Science class	<input type="radio"/> Ⓐ	<input type="radio"/> Ⓑ	<input type="radio"/> Ⓒ	<input type="radio"/> Ⓓ
c. Social studies or history class	<input type="radio"/> Ⓐ	<input type="radio"/> Ⓑ	<input type="radio"/> Ⓒ	<input type="radio"/> Ⓓ
d. Math class	<input type="radio"/> Ⓐ	<input type="radio"/> Ⓑ	<input type="radio"/> Ⓒ	<input type="radio"/> Ⓓ

VB345715

7. For school this year, how often have you been asked to write long answers to questions on tests or assignments that involved reading?

- ☐ Ⓐ Never
- ☐ Ⓑ Once or twice this year
- ☐ Ⓒ Once or twice a month
- ☐ Ⓓ At least once a week

VB378054

8. When you write, how often does your teacher talk to you about what you are writing?

- ☐ Ⓐ Never
- ☐ Ⓑ Sometimes
- ☐ Ⓒ Always



VB378131

9. When you write, how often does your teacher ask you to write more than one draft of a paper?

- ☐ Ⓐ Never
- ☐ Ⓑ Sometimes
- ☐ Ⓒ Always

VB429583

10. When your teacher grades your writing, how important is each of the following? Fill in **one** oval on each line.

	Not very important	Moderately important	Very important
a. Your spelling, punctuation, and grammar	<input type="radio"/> Ⓐ	<input type="radio"/> Ⓑ	<input type="radio"/> Ⓒ
b. The way your paper is organized	<input type="radio"/> Ⓐ	<input type="radio"/> Ⓑ	<input type="radio"/> Ⓒ
c. The quality and creativity of your ideas	<input type="radio"/> Ⓐ	<input type="radio"/> Ⓑ	<input type="radio"/> Ⓒ
d. The length of your paper	<input type="radio"/> Ⓐ	<input type="radio"/> Ⓑ	<input type="radio"/> Ⓒ

11. How much education do you think you will complete?

- ☐ Ⓐ I will not finish high school.
- ☐ Ⓑ I will graduate from high school.
- ☐ Ⓒ I will have some education after high school.
- ☐ Ⓓ I will graduate from college.
- ☐ Ⓔ I will go to graduate school.
- ☐ Ⓕ I don't know.

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VC101417

VC034559

12. What do you expect that your main activity will be in the year after you leave high school?

- Ⓐ Working full time
- Ⓑ Attending a vocational, technical, or business school
- Ⓒ Attending a two-year college
- Ⓓ Attending a four-year college, service academy, or university
- Ⓔ Serving in the military
- Ⓕ Other

VB595182

13. How hard was this test compared to most other tests you have taken this year in school?

- Ⓐ Easier than other tests
- Ⓑ About as hard as other tests
- Ⓒ Harder than other tests
- Ⓓ Much harder than other tests

14. How hard did you try on this test compared to how hard you tried on most other tests you have taken this year in school?

- Ⓐ Not as hard as on other tests
- Ⓑ About as hard as on other tests
- Ⓒ Harder than on other tests
- Ⓓ Much harder than on other tests

VB595184

15. How important was it to you to do well on this test?

- Ⓐ Not very important
- Ⓑ Somewhat important
- Ⓒ Important
- Ⓓ Very important

